



The Latest on Mediterranean Forests

N°14 June 2009



Editorial

Since the founding of the IAMF in 1996, anyone involved in whatever way with Mediterranean woodland and forest ecosystems will have been able to find in our Association other people who share his or her special interest and then, together, strive to obtain real changes in the attitude and respect with which these natural areas are considered.

Over this time, there may be some who have felt disappointed by the IAMF; if so, it is no doubt because their legitimate expectations for this youthful organisation have not been met. Yet, on balance, the achievements of the Association are far from disappointing. Besides the list of positive results, it cannot be denied that several members of our network believe more and more in the originality and the usefulness of the IAMF. Though contributions vary enormously from one member to another, from one country to another, or depending on the different stages of experience, there is reason to believe that there are going to be yet more «drive wheels» useful to our Association.

Pursuing a positive dynamic for the expansion of this organisation can only be sustained by well-meaning and enlightened voluntary efforts. I think such voluntary input is your business, too. If you think that the IAMF's ongoing existence and lasting impact are the affair of «others», just ask yourself this question: How have they managed to survive over these last 13 years? It is possible there are indeed those believing in the ideals of Mediterranean forestry and who may devote part of their energy to bringing life to our network. But I believe we are capable of mobilising far greater numbers of people to join our Association, to increase their fund of available energy and to influence its orientation.

Being a member of the IAMF does not only mean sharing a commonly-held vision for Mediterranean woodland areas; your contribution, in whatever way and degree, should be added to that of «others» to make our activities that much more effective and significant.

If you consider that you belong to these «others», contact the IAMF, by the way you find easiest, so that you can play your part too!

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Abdelhamid KHALDI
IAMF Administrative Board Member

Recently, IAMF took part in...

Oppède (France)
March 19 2009

Jean Bonnier, Executive Secretary, attended the Workshop on Technologies organized by the French association Forêt Méditerranéenne in the framework of the "Energy - Forest - Territories" event.

Le Luc (France)
April 17 2009

David Gasc, Project Manager, took part in an information day on cork oak and the future of cork harvesting organized by the ASL Suberaie Varoise.

Marrakech (Morocco)
April 29-30 2009

Omar Mhirit, Council member, represented the IAMF at the EFIMED annual meeting during which a *Memorandum of Understanding* between EFIMED and IAMF was signed.

Alès (France)
June 16-17 2009

Jean Bonnier and David Gasc participated in the Workshop on Economics and Territories organized by the French association Forêt Méditerranéenne.

Murcia (Spain)
June 20 2009

The IAMF held its 14th Annual General Meeting, followed by a meeting of the Administrative Board Council.

Murcia (Spain)
June 22-24 2009

Jean Bonnier, Francisco Castro Rego, vice-President, Mohamed Larbi Chakroun, Preseident, David Gasc, H'maïed Kouki and Jean de Montgolfier, Council members, attended the launching seminar of the QUALIGOUV European cooperation project organized by the Murcia Region which is the lead partner of the project.

Membership and/or subscription form

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The organization of forestry in Greece

by Dimitris Zianis and Gabriel Stryoglou

Introduction

Greece is located in the southernmost part of Balkan Peninsula and to the north borders on Albania, FYROM and Bulgaria. It is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the south and west, and stretches eastwards through the Aegean to Turkey. It occupies an area of 131,957 km² and is a rugged, mountainous country with a few small plains.

The Pindus range, with a north-south orientation, divides Greece into two distinct areas in terms of climate and phytogeography. However, the main factor affecting vegetation structure and distribution in Greece is the variety of the relief, with an altitudinal range from zero up to 2,917 meters a.s.l. (Mt Olympus). The climate is typically Mediterranean with a yearly precipitation gradient from 380 to more than 1,630 mm (westward and from lowlands to high altitudes) while the mean temperature of the warmest month varies from 15.4 to 34.8 °C. The northern areas and the mountains are exposed to continental influences with very cold winters (Photo 1).

A few thousand years ago, Greece was covered with extensive forests though the climate in the Mediterranean Basin was probably very similar to the present (Barbero *et al.*, 1998). Their destruction began at the close of the Neolithic age



Photo 1: Alpine grasslands in “Valia Calda” National Park

when man first built permanent dwellings and settled down to agriculture and husbandry.

Nowadays, about 25% of Greece is forested area (trees forming productive stands) while ca. 24% is partially wooded areas consisting of “non-industrial” forests used mainly for erosion control, grazing, fuelwood and resin production, etc. More than 2,190,000 ha of forests are characterised as coppiced or coppiced with standards while the rest, 1,166,000 ha, is high forest.

Structure and production of Greek forests

Forest vegetation in Greece reflects the climatic and topographic variability as well as the fluctuations of soil conditions met across the country. A

broad classification scheme based on an altitudinal gradient distinguishes five vegetation zones and is summarised in Table 1 (Athanasiadis, 1986). It should be mentioned that the southernmost distribution limits in Europe of Norway spruce, Scots pine and birch are found in northern Greece. There are about 5,700 plant species of which 1,000 are endemic.

According to the “Strategic study for the development of Greek forestry and wood production” which was coordinated by the Forest Research Institute in Thessaloniki in 1986, the total volume of growing stock was estimated to be 153 millions m³. The annual net increment, on an area basis, amounted to 1.34 m³ha⁻¹ for conifers and 0.98 m³ha⁻¹ for broadleaves while about 60% of net increment was removed, on

Table 1: Vegetation zones in Greece

VEGETATION ZONE	ALTITUDE	SPECIES
Thermo-Mediterranean <i>Quercetalia ilicis</i>	Up to 300 m in northern areas and 800 m in the south	<i>Quercus ilex, Laurus nobilis, Ceratonia siliqua, Olea europaea, Arbutus spp., Cistus spp., Erica spp., Pistacia spp.</i>
Sub-continental thermophilous deciduous forests <i>Quercetalia pubescentis</i>	Up to 300 m in northern areas and 800 m in the south. In winter, temperature falls below 0°C and there is snow	<i>Quercus spp., Fagus orientalis, Castanea vesca, Pinus nigra, Pinus maritima, Cupressus sempervirens, Abies cephalonica</i>
Fagus-Abies forests and mountainous submediterranean conifers <i>Fagetalia</i>	Up to 1800 m. The dry period is about 1-1.5 months and there is snow for more than 1 month	<i>Fagus spp., Quercus sessiliflora, Quercus pedunculata, Populus tremula, Betula pendula, Fraxinus excelsior, Acer spp., Pinus nigra, Pinus silvestris, Abies alba</i>
Boreal conifers <i>Vaccinio picetalia</i>	Up to 2200 m. There is no dry period, snow lasts several months and above the tree line there are alpine grasslands with <i>Astragalus sp., Festuca sp., Juniperus nana</i>	<i>Picea abies, Abies alba, Pinus peuce, Pinus silvestris, Pinus heldreichii, Populus tremula, Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Azonal – riparian vegetation		<i>Salix sp., Platanus sp., Populus sp.</i>

average, during the 1987-1996 period (mainly fir, spruce, pines, beech, oak, chestnut). During that period wood demand was more than 1.9 million m³ which was mainly covered by imports (1.35 million m³).

Forest management in brief

Following independence from the Ottoman Empire, a Ministry of Economics was established in 1833 with a brief to 'manage and protect the national forests'. Three

years later the Forest Service was established and coordinated by Bavarian foresters in order to prohibit resin production, to regulate grazing and develop a forest land register. However, none of these objectives were fulfilled. In 1946, the Directorate General of Forestry was established in the Ministry of Agriculture and nowadays, after many reforms and restructuring, it consists of 106 Forest Departments located throughout Greece.

Foresters graduating from five higher educational institu-

tes are employed by the Forest Service which is responsible for the management of forest ecosystems according to the principles of sustainable development. Forestry is based on management plans updated usually every 10 years. Unfortunately, the National Forest Inventory was carried out only once (started in 1963 and ended in 1985) and is considered to be out-dated for current forest practices.

More than 66% of the forested area belongs to the State, 12% to municipalities, 4% to monasteries and about 18% are privately owned forests. Conifers make up 38.4% of the forested area, the temperate broadleaved 62.6% and the rest is occupied by evergreen broadleaves species.

Most of the stands are of uneven age with irregular structure and diameter distributions following a quasi-

Photo 2: Sweet chestnut (left) and holm oak (right) coppice forests in Mount Athos



inverted J form. One of the main objectives in Greek forestry concerning coppice forests (Photo 2) is to convert them into high forests while in productive stands the shelterwood and selective silvicultural systems are applied, depending on the ecological characteristics of the species (Dafis, 1966, 1969, 1988).

There are 10 national parks in Greece, one classified natural site (Photo 3), 19 forests with landscape value distributed throughout the country and two World Heritage areas. Research is carried out at the two institutes located in Athens and Thessalonika and it should be noted that there is also the Greek Agroforestry Network (<http://www.agroforestry.gr/index.php>) which serves mainly as a forum for exchanging information and ideas for issues related to traditional agroforestry systems.

Main issues in Greek forestry

The vast majority of Greek forests were affected by WW II and guerilla fighting (1941-1949) because military operations occurred in mountainous areas. After the war, overgrazing and illegal felling were usual practices for the rural woodland population. During the 1960s, urbanisation took place and natural regeneration covered forest gaps and abandoned mountain farmland. Thus, the accumulation of dead biomass increased the flammability of forests, especially those located at low altitudes, near abandoned villages and along the coast.



Photo 3: Spruce forest reserve in Frachto, Drama

Nowadays, these settlements are used as holiday homes and tourist accommodation and fires reaching these sites destroy buildings and occasionally kill people. Accidental events (barbeques, burning dump sites, electrical sparks, etc) are the main causes of wildfires but in the last three decades the number of arsons has increased following the high demand for building zones. Unfortunately, the Greek government has legalised occupied burnt land previously classified as forests, since law enforcement to evict people from these areas has been very poor.

Even though trees species around the Mediterranean Rim are adapted to fire, forest degradation takes place since protection against successive fire, grazing and illegal building activities has not been applied. As a result, soil is eroded and about 30% of the country's land is one step away from desertification (Hatzistathis and Hatzistathis, 2003).

Developing a forest land register, increasing the number of full-time foresters and applying a central forest policy should be the first steps in tackling the problems that Greek forestry is facing today.

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19th Session of the Committee on Forestry of the FAO

Minutes from Beti Piotto and Lorenzo Ciccarese

What is COFO?

The Committee on Forestry (COFO) is the most important statutory body for forestry of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Biennial sessions of COFO are held in Rome with the aim of identifying emerging policy and technical issues, seeking solutions and advising on appropriate action.

The meeting

More than 500 participants from COFO member states attended the 19th COFO session (March 16-20 2009), including UN agencies, heads of forestry departments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

2009 being the “Year of Climate Change”, this theme seemed to be a sort of omnipresent “must”, and the main topics discussed were frequently related to this important issue. Other significant topics regarded the FAO Strategy for Forests and Forestry were tackled:

- ✓ the Collaborative Partnership for the Strategic Framework on Forests and Climate Change, Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and climate change;
- ✓ preserving forest genetic resources;
- ✓ reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;
- ✓ access to financing;

✓ the impact of recent economic turbulence on the forest sector;

✓ and the XIIIth World Forestry Congress (Buenos Aires, October 2009).

Side events also provided an opportunity to discuss hot themes, such as fire and climate change, forestry research, preparations for the eighth session of the UN Forum on Forests (May 2009).

Keynote speaker

The COFO 2009 keynote speaker was the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Climate Change, Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, who chaired the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission). In 1987, the Brundtland Commission produced the report “Our Common Future”, which placed sustainable development on the international policy agenda and addressed the links between development and environment, at the same time challenging policy-makers to consider the interrelationships between the environment and economic and social issues when it comes to resolving worldwide problems.

In her speech, Dr Brundtland reminded participants of the latest findings of the 2007 Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), affirm-

ing that climate change due to accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is “unequivocal” and that such gases are the fingerprints of human activity as well. Like U.S. President Obama, Dr. Brundtland said “Yes, we can” afford present challenges.

She also recalled some figures that define the importance of forests and forest services for sustainable development: 20% of the world's population depends on forest resources for their livelihoods, forest products represent nearly 4% of the global trade value of all commodity products, nearly 60% of all global “run off” water comes from forests. Conversely, deforestation goes on at an alarming rate: between 2000 and 2005, gross deforestation continued at a rate of 12.9 million ha/year, mostly occurring in the tropics. Global deforestation (and forest degradation) rates have a significant impact on the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) calculated that, for the same period, the contribution of land-use changes to GHG accumulation in the atmosphere was 5.8 Gt CO₂/yr (which corresponds to 20% of the total annual anthropogenic emissions of GHGs). Yet the Kyoto Protocol allows compensation only for planting forests in developing countries, not for avoiding deforestation. From a global perspective, this obviously makes no

sense. What *is* desirable is clear and straightforward: developing countries should be given incentives to maintain existing forests, to trade carbon offsets not just for new forests but for avoiding deforestation; and they should be compensated for the very precious environmental services tropical forests render to the whole world.

Though it is difficult to confer a value for preserving existing forests, many authors consider the annual value of a 20 percent reduction in the current rate of deforestation is between \$30 and \$40 billion a year.

Since the 12th session of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali, December 2007, discussions about the inclusion of reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) activities in a post-2012 climate agreement have been moving at an accelerated pace and negotiators are expected to adopt a resolution in Copenhagen, next December, at the 14th session of the COP.

Dr. Brundtland referred to the UN Collaborative Programme on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (The UN-REDD Programme launched as a collaborative initiative between the UN Environment Programme, UNEP; the UN Development Programme, UNDP; and the FAO) which aims to create structures to support developing countries in designing both national strategies to reduce carbon emissions resulting from forest loss as

well as systems for monitoring. The first phase of the UN-REDD Programme is being funded by the Norwegian government.

Other important issues

The Collaborative Partnership for the Strategic Framework on Forests and Climate Change (CPF) is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organisations and secretariats with substantial programmes on forests: CIFOR, FAO, ITTO, IUFRO, CBD Secretariat, GEF Secretariat, UNCCD, UNFF, UNFF Newsletter, UNFF Secretariat Online Forum, UNFCCC, UNDP, UNEP, ICRAF, World Bank.

CPF has prepared a document (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/media/16639/1/0/>) to support the UNFCCC process, as well as other agreements, in response to the need for concerted action on forests and climate change.

The contents of the paper can be summarized as 5 principal messages:

1 - Sustainable forest management provides an effective framework for forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation.

2 - Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures should proceed concurrently.

3 - Intersectoral collaboration, economic incentives and the provision of alternative livelihoods are essential for reducing deforestation and forest degradation.

4 - Enhancing capabilities and reforms in governance are urgently required.

5 - Accurate forest monitoring and assessment fosters informed decision-making but requires greater coordination at all levels.

Closing plenary session

During the closing plenary, the report of COFO-19 was adopted. The main features are listed below:

✓ Publication of the State of the World's Forests, edition 2009.

✓ COFO welcomed the CPF's Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change.

✓ COFO noted changes taking place and the consequent need to adapt forest policies and institutions, and recommended that FAO intensify efforts to provide timely support for this.

✓ COFO asked the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the FAO Panel of Experts to prepare a report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources for 2013

✓ By shaping an action programme for FAO in forestry, the COFO endorsed the new FAO Strategy for Forests and Forestry, clarifying that it refers to governance "at all levels" and adding references to forest genetic resources and to innovation.

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Mediterranean forests, the talk of the town!

For more details and the latest updated information, don't forget to check the diary on our website (www.aifm.org).
And don't forget: tell us about any event that doesn't appear in the diary - it will make it that much better!

"Biodiversity and forest management" Programme

9-11 September 2009 - Champagne-Ardenne (France)

Website: http://www.gip-ecofor.org/publi/page.php?id=1303&rang=0&domain=1&lang=fr_FR

19th Regional Meetings on the Environment

1-3 October 2009 - Château-Arnoux / Saint-Auban (France)

Website: <http://www.arpe-paca.org/infos.asp?ThNum=Th00000275>

6th National Forestry Congress "Forests in a globalized world"

6-9 October 2009 - Ponta Delgada (Portugal)

Website: <http://www.spcf.pt>

32nd Annual General Meeting of Forêt Méditerranéenne

10 October 2009 - Domaine de Saint-Pons (France)

Website: <http://foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm>

13th World Forestry Congress on the topic "Forests in Development: a Vital Balance"

18-25 October 2009 - Buenos Aires (Argentina)

e-mail: info@cfm2009.org

Website: www.wfc2009.org

Seminar "The cork oak management and quality"

19-21 October 2009 - Tlemcen (Algeria)

Website: <http://www.univ-tlemcen.dz/site%20vert/index.html>

2nd Seminar of the European co-operation project Qualigouv

18-20 November 2009 - Alpilles/Luberon (France)

Contact Alpilles: s.jaulmes@parc-alpilles.fr

Contact Luberon: aline.salvaudon@parcduluberon.fr

4th International Congress "Fire ecology and management"

30 November-4 December 2009 - Savannah (USA)

Website: <http://www.fireecology.net/Congress09/Home.html>

6th International Conference on Forest Fire Research

15-18 November 2010 - Coimbra (Portugal)

Website: <http://www.adai.pt/icffr>

5th International Wildland Fire Conference

9-13 May 2011 - Sun City (South Africa)

Website: <http://www.wildfire2011.org>

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